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ABSTRACT

Reporting on Australia's attempts to aid in the resettlement of European and Asian refugees and other immigrants, this paper focused on the progress of governmental institutions in dealing with migrant problems such as education, employment, and cultural integration. The language barrier, caused by a lack of knowledge of English by the majority of incoming migrants, constituted the major inhibitor of acculturation into the socioeconomic and educational systems. Government efforts to identify and combat language disadvantages resulted in the development and initiation of multicultural programs for migrant adults and their children. Implementation of the recommendations of a Parliamentary review in 1977 included a "Program of Initial Settlement," which concentrated on intensive courses in English and formal orientations in housing, education, employment, and other areas of need. Settlement centres, unemployment benefits, interpreter services, multicultural resource centers, voluntary services, media services, and the creation of an Institute of Multicultural Affairs contributed to the nationwide and federally funded initiative, which is currently being evaluated, and which is believed to have done much to alleviate the common problems faced by Australia's migrants. (JD)

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REFUGEE SETTLERS: SOME ASPECTS OF AUSTRALIA'S CHANGED INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE.

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REFUGEE SETTLERS: SOME ASPECTS OF AUSTRALIA'S CHANGED INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE

The middle decades of this century saw a significant development in immigration policy in Australia, away from an entrenched reliance upon the United Kingdom and towards other parts of Europe. Among the groups involved at an early stage of this policy change, and perhaps not a little to do with its very occurrence, was that of the Displaced Person, that multitude of victims of various sorts of oppression which was initially sheltered in camps for stateless persons after World War Two. In the nineteen fifties and beyond this first group was augmented by new refugee groups from Hungary and other countries overshadowed by the USSR. In addition again there was an increased incidence of non-refugee immigration from southern Europe.

Important among the Australian social scientists who realised the need for systematic research in respect of this movement was the late Jean Martin. In her last post at the Australian National University in Canberra she was engaged in work connected with refugees from southeast Asia but many years previously her work had concerned their European counterparts. Her book entitled 'Refugee Settlers' traced the careers of a group of Displaced Persons from their arrival in Australia in 1953 until a time some ten years later.[1] In it she indicates that the government sponsored process of refugee resettlement in Australia at that time was largely restricted to the provision of shelter and sustenance in Commonwealth Hostels for those arrivals who had no other refuge immediately available upon arrival.

A somewhat more general and polemical account of the same period is provided by Jupp who reports that some 200,000 refugees were brought to

to Australia under the auspices of the International Refugee Organisation and most arrived in the first five years of this arrangement. He provides an explanation as to why the settlement procedures were not more than basic.

> "The fact remains that many skilled and highly qualified people were pitchforked into manual labour, dumped in outback construction camps and regarded both as foreigners and cheap labour (who) found it difficult to get anything other than factory work."[2]

Jupp points out that the two years of bonded employment in manual work which was exacted of the refugees at that time did nothing to enhance or maintain the later career prospects of possibly highly educated people in their new country.

Of the group researched by her over a number of years subsequent to a period of participant observation in a Commonwealth Hostel which housed them, Martin remarked some who appeared either to lose or to lack initiative to acquire the skills which would have assisted upward mobility from their imposed start-point at the bottom of the heap.

> "(T)hey have directed all their energies towards establishing themselves financially. Whether they avoided changing their behaviour and habits because they were interested only in making money or whether money-making assumed importance as a substitute for other satisfactions which eluded them are impossible questions to disentangle."[3]

Of the public reaction the Displaced Persons encountered beyond the hostels Martin records as follows:

> "In 1953 about one-third of the migrants had experienced some unpleasant incident involving Australians with whom they had worked, and many more had experienced general attitudes of unfriendliness."

She continues by contending that the resulting feelings of humiliation, rejection and loneliness were more blunted than eliminated or changed some ten years later. Phillip Adams, a well known Australian newspaper columnist echoed this in an article of 12th July 1980 which was inspired by an invitation to speak at a conference on multiculturalism.

> "...until 1947 the only welcome foreigner was that expatriate Father Christmas...(W)e resented the migrants and their mysteries. Mind you, we tried to accept the official euphemism of New Australian - although they were, of course, really reffos and D.Ps, not to mention wogs, spags, kikes, yids and Poms."[4]

Hence Jupp's comment of 1966. "For all the apparent influence of Australia's 2,000,000 migrants they might just as well not exist."[5]

In a book published in 1978 Martin stresses the extent to which the economic development to which Australia was then committed demanded that immigrants be seen as a normal element in population growth.[6] Successive Commonwealth governments therefore devoted themselves to the task of defining migrants as assimilable, a task which Adams' recollection in 1980 does much to show was sustainable to the degree that communication between the migrants* and what might be called Anglo-Australians was limited.

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* The term 'migrant' is commonly used in Australia to refer to the immigrant rather than the wanderer or travelling worker. (See Martin 1965:51).

The limitation of contact was easy enough to maintain. The language barrier stood immensely high for all but the well educated. In a survey of 1966 Jupp found that over half of Greek and Italian immigrants spoke bad or no English. Few officers of the Commonwealth Employment Service knew a language other than English and few multilinguals were to be found in the Commonwealth Hostels. Beyond their gates organised interpreting and translating services were almost non-eixstent.

2.

The 1970's constitute a period of review and of readjustment of attitudes to migrants in Australia. Further explicit appreciation of the importance to the nation of non-British immigration continued to issue from the major political parties. Matheson remarks that the Labour Party Conference of 1971 declared a party platform which eschewed, "...discrimination on any grounds of race or colour of skin or nationality." A year later the ruling Liberal Party lauded the fact that half the increase in the Australian work force was attributable to migrant workers. (Including sixty-nine per cent of miners, fifty-six per cent of tool setters and thirty-seven per cent of fitters).[7]

The socio-economic situation of migrants became a matter for critical scrutiny by the dominant culture during this period. Hollingworth[8] among many others made strong representation about the lack of interpreter services in the courts and hospitals. The word 'multiculturalism' began to gain currency and particular attention was accorded to the relation between migrants and the schools. The assimilationist character of the educational process in state schools came under attack. Hollingworth complained:

> "(E)veryone must conform to the requirements of a system formulated by the Anglo-Saxon middle class planners and taught by Anglo-Saxon middle class teachers.[9]

Even that conformity was blocked by the paucity of provision made to overcome the language barrier. Abiuso contends that the first centre for the teaching of 'Migrant English' in Melbourne was set up as late as 1967.

> "It was an 'annexe' or disused area of the noisy canteen made of corrugated iron...Children who were just off the boat in Port Melbourne were processed for a few months...before... (joining)...the silent rows of other (non English speaking) children in the main building."[10]

Nevertheless there was now a growing awareness of a need to improve the institutional provision made for groups in the society with cultural, racial and ethnic backgrounds other than the dominant culture. In respect of schooling the report of the Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission, published in 1973, recommended detailed investigation into the educational problems of migrant children.[11] The newly created Commissioner for Community Relations took up precisely that recommendation. His first report, published in 1976 stated that the primary schools of the land were drastically ill-equipped to cope with the reality "that about 700,000 Australian children begin school with a first language other than English."[12]

Abiuso's comment quoted above was written when he was part of a team of teachers in a Melbourne city school which was associated with a project from the School of Education of La Trobe University designed to initiate and trial programs to combat disadvantage. These teams had a two year span of formal operation in the schools concerned. In this

case the years were 1973/74 and the team was forerunner to many such action oriented research groups formed under the aegis of universities and other bodies funded by the Commonwealth Schools Commission.

Martin gives a table which shows that between 1970 and 1976 the number of special teachers in the area of Migrant Education increased by one hundred and ten per cent and spending to support Child Migrant Education increased from one tenth of a million to ten million dollars. The number of children receiving instruction in special classes rose from under nine to over ninety thousand.[13] She also documents the impetus towards multicultural education, prominent in which field was Dr Marta Rado whose Multilingual Materials Project has been outlined in a number of publications.[14]

As the foregoing is intended to suggest the principal institutional sign of heightened consciousness of cultural diversity took the form of an appraisal and modification of educational services.[15] Other difficulties and dysfunctions besetting non-Anglo Australian groups, it can be argued, derive from lack of facility in the language of the dominant culture, which deficiency is productive of low educational attainment in a general and hence of restricted life options. Where the latter condition already obtained then action was necessarily confined to the palliative rather than the remedial. Work in the field of language acquisition could be enabling and developmental, educational rather than within the domain of welfare support. Hence it had the appeal of being both dynamically formative and well founded in terms of cost-benefit return.

Nevertheless, in respect of all this work, there remained an element of the corrective. The making over of even educational procedures was

after the event of neglect and error in immigration and settlement procedures of the previous decade.

The extreme end of the 1970's saw momentous events in south-east Asia. In Australia a decade or more of experience of correcting past errors which was remarked in the previous section did much to maintain the national regard for immigration and settlement issues. It is plausible to suggest that this was perhaps what produced the comparatively rapid governmental response to the new refugee situation which was heralded by the arrival of the first of the 'boat people' in Darwin. (Grant[16] has it that the first boat to arrive was the Kein Gang, KG 4435. It carried five young men and landed 26th April 1976).

On the first of September 1977 a four person committee was instructed by Parliament to carry out a review of Post-Arrival Programs and Services to Migrants. Its chairman was Frank Galbally Q.C. The committee's report was presented on the twenty-seventh of April 1978. The government accepted and fully endorsed it, announcing an expenditure of more than fifty million dollars above current levels in order to implement its recommendations. The latter included the following:[17]

(i) A Program of Initial Settlement. This included special intensive courses in English and formal orientation courses on housing, education, employment and other areas of need. The program would be carried out within or from Settlement Centres. Special financial assistance equivalent to unemployment benefit would be granted to those engaged in the six to twelve weeks course.

(ii) A similar provision would be accorded those who did not take up residence in a Centre upon arrival but, instead, joined relatives and friends in the general community.

(iii) Special provision would be made to instruct the children of incoming migrants in knowledge of English.[18]

(iv) Further courses for adults would be developed in extension of the initial courses in the English language mentioned in (i) above. The courses would have specific relevance to certain employment needs.

Accompanying this recommendation in the Galbally Report there is explicit mention of the fact that; (a) "between 1967/8 and 1976/7 about 400,000 adult migrants had arrived from non-English speaking countries" about seventy-five per cent of whom would have needed special English language instruction but "...many[19] have had no ...(such)...instruction..." and (b) "different levels of education ...require flexibility in the range of educational provision."

(v) The provision of extended interpreter services in important areas such as health, law and education.

(vi) The establishment of Multicultural Resource Centres to provide a focus for welfare and self-help activities for migrants.[21]

(vii) Small scale project funding to encourage ethnic and voluntary agencies, "to improve their ability to respond to existing and future needs."

(viii) The creation of an Institute of Multicultural Affairs which would commission research, disseminate information, prepare resource material for educational institutions and advise government and civic bodies.

(ix) The creation of Multicultural Television Service.

4.

Plainly all this provides a marked contrast to the institutional framework which pertained in the 1950's in Australia. It is, of course, early to say just how different it will be in its effects if, indeed, one can ever overcome the formidable methodological difficulties which face anyone attempting that enterprise. On the other hand, and with this in mind, it is legitimate to make some observations.

To date movement out of the Settlement Centres, in Melbourne at least, has predominantly been either into one inner suburb which contains a number of associations and resource centres geared to south-east Asian refugees[22], or into the districts immediately surrounding the Settlement Centres themselves. The following table is based upon movement out of two widely separated centres.

MOVEMENT FROM SETTLEMENT CENTRES

July-December 1979

	Number of persons leaving	Into adjacent suburbs	Inter inner-city suburb
Centre A	390	145	56
Centre B	158	51	36
Totals	548	196	92

The indicators are that there will be further movement of these groups outward from the areas of initial post-centre settlement once dependence upon subsidised housing lessens and the need for guidance in everyday matters is less frequent. This has obvious implications for schooling. At present the more distant suburbs have comparatively little

contact with the new immigrants and few material resources or specialised personnel to make particular educational treatment for them possible. Considerable attention and provision has been provided in the schools in districts where initial post-centre settlement has been heavy.

Employment patterns are not easy to trace. Agencies such as the Commonwealth Employment Service seek to preserve the confidentiality of their dealings and, in any case, are insufficiently staffed to undertakecomplex analyses of job careers. The received wisdom or folk lore is that the hard-working south-east Asian does not stay long without employment. How this (if true) is explained by the level of employment which is (must) be taken remains to be ascertained. However, the characteristics of refugee groups in terms of employment possibilities in the sense of possessed attributes is more amenable to scrutiny. Of four refugee intakes into one Settlement Centre between 18th June and 28th September 1979, (a total of one hundred and forty-one adults). slightly more than a quarter had received only a primary education and eleven per cent had received some form of tertiary education. Of the stated heads of families (mainly male) and single persons within the group (N=86) approximately one third could not speak English on arrival but twenty two per cent spoke fair to good English. The range of past occupations in the entire group ran from button-maker and fisherman to computer programmer and doctor.

The effectiveness of the English language and general orientation course structure is presently being researched by a Commonwealth funded team from the University of Sydney. The parameters of the task are again wide. The program concerned embraces a comprehensive age range[23], diverse educational backgrounds and a great range of innate abilities.

Plainly further and later research will be needed before it can sensibly be judged whether or not the timing and duration of these courses has been appropriate for all ages, backgrounds and abilities.[24] In the United Kingdom recently, Marjorie Greatbanks has contended that British reception procedures leave the majority of incomers with only the most rudimentary grasp of English and very little comprehension of western life styles and customs.[25] But, whereas it appears that the British government early in 1980 was still in process of creating an institutional apparatus, Australia's nation-wide and federally funded initiative has now been operational for some two years and rather more centrally derived expenditure has been devoted to it. It may perhaps be argued as a consequence that Australia, in respect of the south-east Asian refugee incursion, does not completely exemplify the approach that Stein describes as the usual mode of action, namely "...the ad hoc, emergency, reactive approach."[25] Certainly, the governmentally blessed Galbally Report embodies recommendations designed to avoid such an approach entirely.

> "Since our recommendations have implications for all government departments, an indpendent evaluation of the progress and effectiveness of the program....should be arranged."[26]

The establishment of the projected Institute of Multicultural Affairs has now been effected.[27] Its first researches are in train. They shouldconstitute a first move to activate that recommendation.

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES

1. Martin, J.I. Refugee Settlers: A study of Displaced Persons. (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1965).

2. Jupp, J. Arrivals and departures. (Melbourne: Cheshire-Lansdowne, 1966).

3. Martin. Op.cit. (p.15).

4. Adams, P. Certainly migration was good for Australia...but was it all that good for migrants? (Melbourne: The Age, 12th July 1980).

5. Jupp, Op.cit. (p.122).

6. Martin, J.I. The Migrant Presence. (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1978).

7. Matheson, A. Disadvantage and the migrant. In Claydon, L.F. (ed.) The Urban School, (Melbourne: Fitman Australia, 1975).

8. Hollingworth, P. Two Worlds: School and the Migrant Family. (Melbourne: Stockland Press, 1970).

   The Powerless Poor. (Stockland Press, 1972).

9. Hollingworth. Ibid., 1970 (p.62)

10. Abiuso, G. Towards a Suitable Schooling for Migrants, In Claydon, (ed.) Op.cit. (p.241).

11. Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission, Schools in Australia (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1973).

12. Commissioner for Community Relations. First Annual Report. (Canberra, Australian Government Printer, 1976. P.32).

13. Martin, Op.cit. (p.114).

14. Rado, M. Language in the Curriculum. In Claydon, L.F. Renewing Urban Teaching. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

    Rado, M. Education and the Bilingual Family: Curriculum Implicacions. In Claydon (ed.) The Urban School Op.cit.

    Rado, M. Bilingual Education. Part Three of Claydon, Knight & Rado, Curriculum and Culture: Schooling in a Pluralist Society, (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1977).

15. The Publications and Stock List of The Clearing House on Migration Issues of The Ecumenical Migration Centre issued in 1980 featured one hundred and twenty entries on the topic Children and Education with publication dates between 1973 and 1978. Between the same dates there were ten published items on Settlement and twelve on migrant welfare.

16. Grant, B. The Boat People.(Melbourne, Penguin Books, 1979).

17. Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Papers. Government Initiatives in Post-arrival Programs and Services to Migrants. (Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer, 1978).

18. In the State of New South Wales this has been centred in existing schools near the Settlement Centres. In the State of Victoria special Language Centres have been created, sometimes within the precincts of the Settlement Centres and sometimes in buildings near to them.

19. It was stated that only 21,035 of these had attended full-time courses in English language.

20. An example of a course of this kind is one mounted at Footscray Technical College in Melbourne entitled English for Special Purposes.

21. An example is that of the Geelong Multicultural Centre in the State of Victoria.

22. E.g. ICRA (Indo-China Refugee Association).

23. Age is not a factor so far as the provision of orientation and language courses upon entry into Australia is concerned.

24. It is fair, I think, to say that what exists at present does not adequately meet the requirements of flexibility in dealing with the different levels of education that the Galbally Report lays down.

25. See Times Educational Supplement, 18.1.80 (pp.18-19).

26. Stein, B. The Refugee Experience: An Overview of Refugee Research. Paper presented at a conference on The Refugee Experience at the Royal Anthropological Institute and the Minority Rights Group. London, England 22-24 February 1980.

27. Review of Post-Arrival Programs and Services for Migrants (Galbally Report). (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1978).

28. Perhaps not without consideration for the "ethnic vote" in an election year but it would be a romantic indeed who insisted upon unalloyed philanthropy in the real world of representative democracy.